United Nations S/PV.8438

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8438th meeting

Friday, 21 December 2018, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Ipo	(Côte d'Ivoire)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mrs. Cordova Soria
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Esono Mbengono
	Ethiopia	Mr. Amde
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Kuwait	Mr. Albanai
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Tenya
	Poland	Mr. Mielus
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mr. Hunter

Agenda

The situation in Guinea-Bissau

Special Report of the Secretary-General on the strategic assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2018/1086)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Guinea Bissau

Special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2018/1086)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and His Excellency Mr. Mauro Vieira, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/1086, which contains the special report of the Secretary-General on the strategic assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zerihoun.

Mr. Zerihoun: I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to introduce the special report of the Secretary-General on the assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). I would also like to use this opportunity to provide a brief update on the status of the country's preparation for legislative elections.

More than six months after the appointment of a consensus Prime Minister and the formation of an inclusive Government, both of which were key elements of the Conakry Agreement, the political situation in Guinea-Bissau remains fraught with uncertainty.

Due to technical challenges, the legislative elections were not held as scheduled on 18 November, in contravention of the legal and constitutional time frames. It was in fact only two days ago, on 19 December, that the Government declared the completion of the voter registration. Prior to that, on 5 December, the Office of the Prosecutor General had suspended voter registration, pending an investigation into alleged irregularities. The Prosecutor General instructed security forces to prevent access to the building of the electoral body in charge of voter registration. Thanks to the timely intervention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which, on 12 December, deployed a delegation to Bissau led by the Nigerian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Office of the Prosecutor General reversed course and allowed the resumption of the voter-registration process on 13 December.

In a communiqué, the ECOWAS delegation also called for the legislative elections to be held in January 2019. However, the Prime Minister proposed that the elections be held on 17 February, with 24 February and 10 March also floated as possible dates for the elections. Yesterday, President Vaz issued a decree setting 10 March 2019 as the date for the elections. These developments followed the infighting by the political parties over technical aspects of voter registration, during which accusations were traded of attempts to rig and deliberately delay the process. Such tensions have contributed to an unhealthy pre-electoral atmosphere in the country.

The Party for Social Renewal (PRS), the Rally of the Guinean People/Democratic Party of Guinea, MADEM-G15 — all part of a collective of 18 political parties — have demanded the resignation of the Minister of Territorial Administration for allegedly mismanaging the voter-registration exercise and violating existing laws. In response, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) accused PRS of violating the Conakry Agreement and noted that PRS continued to discredit the voter-registration process despite lack of evidence. PAIGC also accused President Vaz, PRS and their allies of deliberately provoking delays in the electoral process in an effort to cause a Government collapse and postpone the parliamentary elections.

On 5 December, Prime Minister Aristides Gomes responded to an invitation by the National Assembly to provide clarifications on the voter registration. In his response, the Prime Minister said that the voter registration was transparent and that legislative elections would be held in a fair and free manner. In the meantime, an ECOWAS technical team comprising two election experts is presently in Bissau to audit the voter-registration process. The team is expected to report to

the Government and to the ECOWAS Commission on its findings.

Approximately 800,000 citizens — around 95 per cent of the total estimated eligible population — were reported to have been registered to vote as of 12 December, the day the ECOWAS ministerial delegation arrived in Bissau. The basket fund managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has continued to provide technical and financial support to the National Electoral Commission and the electoral body in charge of registration. Outside of the basket fund, Nigeria has provided 205 biometric voter-registration kits to the Government for the voter-registration process. Portugal will make an in-kind contribution of approximately €1 million, which should include the printing and transportation of ballot papers. Timor-Leste pledged a contribution of over $470,000 towards repairing and purchasing electoral equipment and supporting the voter-registration and electoral processes. Some 400 biometric voter-registration kits, procured by UNDP, arrived in Bissau on 26 November. The kits will be used for the annual voter-registration updates required by law.

It seems appropriate at this stage that the international community consider sending a strong message to the Bissau-Guinean authorities and political actors to demonstrate the requisite political will for the organization of credible elections and refrain from further delaying the process. The findings of the assessment of UNIOGBIS undertaken by the Secretary-General underscore the challenging political context in which UNIOGBIS operates, as reflected in the aforementioned developments. UNIOGBIS merits recognition for the crucial role it has played in support of the ECOWAS-led mediation process to resolve the political impasse in Guinea-Bissau. Despite this year's breakthrough, and with the likelihood of avoiding widespread violence, Guinea-Bissau risks lurching from one political crisis to another, unless decisive steps are taken by the Government to meet the new election date decreed by the President.

While UNIOGBIS remains unanimously appreciated by the Government, civil society and international partners on the ground for its preventive role through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and for strengthening the capacities of civil society organizations, the Mission has now been in Guinea-Bissau for close to two decades. Experience has shown that in the absence of a nationally-owned and nationally-led reform process, UNIOGBIS alone will not be able to contribute to sustainable peace and development in Guinea-Bissau. It is for these reasons that the recommendation of the Secretary-General, as reflected in his special report (S/2018/1086), underscores the need for the United Nations to strictly focus on good offices, the coordination of international partners, the promotion of human rights, the incorporation of a gender perspective in peacebuilding, and combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, in close cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. These tasks would occur over three phases: the first phase, the electoral period, runs through mid-2019; the second phase, the immediate post-electoral period, runs from mid-2019 to the end of 2019; and the third phase, the transition and exit period of the Mission, would conclude no later than the end of 2020.

To accomplish the foregoing objectives and subsequent to the reconfiguration the Mission has undergone this year to comply with resolution 2404 (2018), the Secretary-General has endorsed a further reconfiguration of the United Nations presence during the second phase, namely, mid-2019, through the establishment of a streamlined good-offices mission in Bissau, led by a Special Representative and focused primarily on facilitation of the political process. This good-offices mission would then continue to draw down until the end of 2020, while, concurrently, the United Nations Office for West Africa would increase its engagement in Guinea-Bissau, in the light of the mandate to support ECOWAS. The capacities of the United Nations country team would also need to be strengthened to take on further responsibilities going into the transition and Mission drawdown and closure. In this regard, we would expect the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to play a leading role during the transition period, as it did under similar circumstances with the closure of other peacekeeping missions in the subregion.

The latest results of our combined efforts to assist Guinea-Bissau stakeholders in overcoming the political and institutional impasse and launch the country on the path of sustainable development have prompted our guarded optimism. However, the roadblocks encountered during preparations for the legislative elections and the inability of the Government to hold the elections on 18 November have also given us pause. The period leading to the legislative and presidential

elections will be critical and require the continued attention and engagement of the international community. There is still hope for the country to move forward and its political leadership to show good faith and meet its national obligations by holding legislative elections on 10 March 2019.

Before I conclude, I would like to recognize the work of Mr. João Honwana, the independent expert who led the assessment mission to Guinea-Bissau on behalf of the Secretary-General. The continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission in mobilizing the attention and support of the international community for Guinea-Bissau has also been crucial, as has the role played by Special Representative Viegas Filho and the men and women serving in UNIOGBIS in promoting peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau.

Our appreciation extends also to our partners — ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries — for their cooperation and efforts, which have helped pave the way to a better future for Guinea-Bissau.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Zerihoun for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Vieira.

Mr. Vieira: I would like to thank you, Sir, for the invitation to address the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

First, allow me to inform the Council that, on 31 August, after my last briefing to the Council (see S/PV.8337), I hosted, upon the request of the Prime Minister of Guinea-Bissau, Aristides Gomes, a high-level meeting of the PBC, with his participation. That was an opportunity for the Prime Minister to have a direct and interactive dialogue with member States.

On 10 December, I convened a meeting of the Guinea-Bissau configuration when we received updates from several briefers, including Mr. José Viegas Filho, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), and Mr. Tanou Koné, Permanent Observer of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Unfortunately, the Government of Guinea-Bissau was not able to hold elections on 18 November as scheduled, due to a series of sequential delays that led to the voter registration process not being concluded on time.

Special Representative Viegas, in our meeting, underlined that the political parties continued to disagree over technical aspects of the registration, trade accusations of attempts at fraud, and deliberately delay the process. According to him, those tensions are creating an unhealthy pre-electoral atmosphere. Stability, in his view, is also affected by the spreading of views that some would be interested in postponing the legislative voting so as to combine it with the presidential election in 2019. In that regard, it was also mentioned during our discussion that some of the political stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau could find it financially difficult to organize two elections in the same period.

We were also informed that the Government announced the end of voter registration on 19 December and indicated that more than 95 per cent of the estimated potential voters were registered. I also received the information that, yesterday, President José Mário Vaz published a decree establishing 10 March 2019 as the new date for the legislative elections. It is important to underline that the international community has been active in supporting Guinea-Bissau.

The contribution to the election basket fund administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was positively answered and financing the legislative elections is no longer an issue. The fund has collected up to $9.8 million. Nigeria and Timor-Leste have also provided a number of voter registration kits. Portugal will provide the actual ballot papers and the United Nations Development Programme, on its part, has offered another batch of registration equipment and consumables for the polling day.

The international community has also remained engaged with the authorities of the country regarding the electoral process, especially the so-called Guinea-Bissau P5 group of partners in Guinea-Bissau, comprising the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations. I once again commend the international community for supporting the legislative elections.

Guinea-Bissau should also be congratulated for starting the resource mobilization for the basket fund with its own contribution. During our PBC meeting on

10 December, we were informed of the promulgation by the President, on 3 December, of a gender-parity law that establishes a quota of 36 per cent for women candidates for Parliament and representation in public-sector institutions. Allow me to welcome that important step towards gender inclusion in Guinea-Bissau.

Following the deliberations of the configuration, I would like to call on the political stakeholders of Guinea-Bissau to sustain their commitment to the Conakry Agreement. In that respect, I would also call on the leadership of the country to avoid further delays and to hold legislative elections on the established date as a conclusion for the transition towards stability.

Bissau-Guineans should continue engaging in dialogue to resolve their political differences. The Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission will continue to focus on the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the preparations for elections. We will continue to work closely with Special Representative Viegas and all international partners to that end. The ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), UNDP and UNIOGBIS have an important role to play in the crucial Guinea-Bissau electoral cycle.

At the latest PBC meeting, the Permanent Observer of ECOWAS commented on the most recent developments of the Community, including the organization of the next Summit of the Heads of State of ECOWAS, to be held on 22 December in Abuja. The influence of ECOWAS remains very important given the organization's key role in the Conakry Agreement and the presence of the ECOMIB military force in Guinea-Bissau, which had its mandate extended to August 2019.

Allow me therefore to commend the Government of Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS and the European Union for working to extend the ECOMIB presence in the country. Those developments once more highlight the need to building the capacities of the Bissau-Guinean security forces. The PBC will continue to support the United Nations and the international community, in consultation with the Government of Guinea-Bissau, to consider ways to strengthen the institutions of the State, especially the justice system.

Another reason for organizing the PBC meeting was the fact that Prime Minister Aristides Gomes transmitted to me the need of the Government for assistance in addressing the financial crisis afflicting his country, particularly the education sector. During our meeting, we heard from the World Bank on the economic and fiscal situations of the country, which remain severely strained. Officials from the Bank informed me that economic growth is projected to decline to 3.8 per cent from 5.9 per cent in 2017. Tax revenues are also expected to decline from 10.3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2017 to 8.5 per cent of the GDP in 2018 — that is, from $140 million to $115 million — mainly due to lower income from cashew exports. A decline in economic activity and a consequent decrease in imports also contributed to this scenario by lowering tax revenue. They also highlighted the fact that, despite some recent increases in investments in this area, the total spending in education in the country remains low, at 2.2 per cent of GDP, and is dominated by salaries.

In connection with the socioeconomic and political environment, Guinea-Bissau has seen a series of strikes, which have affected the activities of the public sector. State-owned schools in Guinea-Bissau have been closed for months and teachers have organized demonstrations requesting unpaid salaries. According to the information that I received, Guinea-Bissau needs an estimated $7.8 million to pay 18 months' worth of accumulated salaries for teachers. We have also seen, in the past months, a series of strikes and demonstrations by civil servants and ex-combatants. Unfortunately, student demonstrations organized on 9 November were suppressed with force and resulted in the dismissal of the Minister of the Interior by the President.

Allow me to add that I informally consulted the International Monetary Fund and was informed that a mission of the Fund to Guinea-Bissau is being considered for 2019 in order to review the existing programme with the country. Discussions in this regard have been under way since October 2018 and have not been able to reach a conclusion. I will continue to follow this issue closely and bring it to the attention of the PBC.

I would like to call on the international community to consider the possibility of providing emergency and targeted budget support to stabilize the public sector. At the same time, I encourage the Government of Guinea-Bissau, for its part, to do more to demonstrate its full commitment to holding elections and to put in place credible mechanisms to guarantee the proper and transparent use of assistance that may be available.

Today, we have just heard the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, introduce the special report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1086) with options for a possible reconfiguration of the United Nations presence in the country and a reprioritization of its tasks, as determined by the latest revision of the mandate of UNIOGBIS. Among other points, as mentioned today, it proposes a three-phase new engagement of the United Nations with Guinea-Bissau that would end with a transition and the exit of UNIOGBIS. I am informed that the Guinea-Bissau Government was fully consulted in the recent United Nations strategic assessment mission to reconfigure UNIOGBIS. Allow me to add that I believe that it would be positive if the Peacebuilding Commission were also consulted in future assessments of this kind.

UNIOGBIS has continued to play a key supporting role with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and in the efforts of ECOWAS and of the Guinea-Bissau P5 to help the country resolve its challenges. I would like to take this opportunity to once again show the support of this PBC configuration for the work of Special Representative Viegas and his team. The PBC, in its advisory role to the Security Council, could make a positive contribution to the discussion of the reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS. This effort should be consistent with a revised electoral calendar and a transition plan that considers the proposed ECOMIB drawdown.

There is also space for the engagement of the Guinea-Bissau configuration in any transition effort that might happen, including the elaboration of a transition plan, if this is the decision of the Council. The PBC has already demonstrated its potential in transition settings, as exemplified by the work in Sierra Leone and Liberia. We should continue building on these best practices and lessons learned.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Viera for his briefing.

In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Guinea-Bissau to participate in this meeting.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Amde (Ethiopia): Let me join others in thanking Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun and the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations, for their comprehensive briefings on the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

We take note of the overall developments and political trends in Guinea-Bissau, as well as the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) in the country. We support the continued role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his good offices in support of efforts aimed at sustaining peace in Guinea-Bissau, in collaboration with regional, subregional and international partners, through the promotion of inclusive national political dialogues, constitutional and democratic reforms and transparent and peaceful electoral processes.

It is evident that strong political will and a sense of ownership remain critical to supporting peace consolidation in Guinea-Bissau. We take note with concern of the challenges encountered by UNIOGBIS in delivering its mandate, and we call upon all Bissau-Guinean stakeholders to exert collective efforts towards that end. Currently, the political environment in Guinea-Bissau is dominated by the electoral process. We note the postponement of the 18 November legislative election due to delays in the voter registration process. However, we underline the need for the holding of timely and credible legislative and presidential elections, in accordance with the Constitution and national law of Guinea-Bissau, in order to consolidate sustainable peace and national reconciliation.

In this regard, we take note of the Economic Community of West African States communiqué issued on 12 December, which calls upon the Bissau-Guinean authorities to set a new date for the election by 22 December. The decision of the President to implement a gender-parity law, which establishes a quota of 36 per cent for women candidates for Parliament and women's representation in public-sector institutions, is indeed commendable. We believe that this is a step in the right direction to enhance women's participation in political affairs and decision-making processes.

The growing threats caused by drug trafficking and religious extremism, which undermine the peace and stability of the country and the region, are a matter of serious concern. In this regard, we stress the need for concerted efforts of relevant bodies at the national, regional and international levels in order to address the challenge. We express our appreciation to the United

Nations strategic assessment mission for undertaking its work in consultation with all stakeholders, including the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States and the European Union. We believe that the United Nations engagement in the peacebuilding efforts of the country is important, and we hope that it will be taken into account in line with the recommended United Nations reconfiguration during the renewal of the UNIOGBIS mandate in February 2019.

We commend all international partners, as well as subregional and regional organizations, especially the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union, for their considerable efforts in facilitating dialogue and generating collective pressure for the implementation of the Conakry Agreement.

Finally, we reiterate the importance of the Conakry Agreement in addressing the political and institutional challenges the country is facing. Therefore, we call on all stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to respect and comply with the Agreement.

Mr. Esono Mbengono (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is with great satisfaction and enthusiasm that Equatorial Guinea expresses its appreciation for the convening of this meeting, which allows us once again to analyse and share perspectives on the political and institutional situation in Guinea-Bissau.

My delegation would like to thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira for their very relevant briefings.

I would like to focus my speech on three vital points. First, we stress the importance of the current electoral process in ensuring a return to political and institutional stability in Guinea-Bissau. Secondly, we underscore the urgent need for far-reaching reforms to move the country forward. Lastly, I will share my views on the post-election period.

The main challenge to the consensus-based Government of Prime Minister Aristides Gomes, formed seven months ago, has been to create a political environment that builds trust and is conducive to the holding of free and transparent legislative elections, in particular by updating the electoral register and establishing a new mapping division that, in theory, would enable the Government and the National Electoral Commission to hold elections in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. Furthermore, despite the clear desire of the United Nations and other regional and international partners for the legislative elections to be held on 18 November, in accordance with the legal and constitutional timelines, organizing the elections was fraught with difficulties, including a delay in the delivery of electoral kits. That led the Government to postpone the electoral census process, which was suspended by decision of the Guinea-Bissau Public Prosecutor's Office, following an investigation into irregularities reported in the process.

Nonetheless, Equatorial Guinea takes note of the announcement made yesterday by President José Mário Vaz to hold legislative elections on 10 March 2019. It would be advisable for all stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau to refuse to allow the holding of elections to undermine the fragile stability achieved thus far. In that regard, it is essential that the parties concerned continue to examine any initiative that could lead to the implementation of other important provisions of the Conakry Agreement that would contribute to ending the current political crisis. In addition, we commend the efforts of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and regional and subregional actors, such as the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau, whose support, through their good offices function, is vital to ensuring that the electoral process is brought to a satisfactory end.

We take note of the recommendation of the Secretary-General for a UNIOGBIS drawdown once the electoral process has been completed. After two decades in Guinea-Bissau, we believe that it makes sense to redefine the objectives of United Nations presence in the country. We also recommend that the political mission, in particular after its drawdown, continue working closely with key regional actors in support of the institutional reform programme.

Elections are by no means a panacea to the country's problems. That is why there is ongoing focus on the need to implement reforms in the areas of security, justice and public administration, including in the education and health sectors. Firm political will and a sense of ownership and identification on the part of national authorities are crucial to that end.

In conclusion, the path to restoring stability post-elections will be a very important phase, since it will enable the new Government to build on its reforms. In that regard, UNIOGBIS will again have the opportunity to continue assisting national authorities in implementing their reform programme by providing strategic support and advice on strengthening their democratic institutions. Once the country is politically stable and the long cycle of instability ends, it would be well advised to seriously address the need for sustainable economic development. To that end, it will be essential to continue seeking additional partners to implement social and economic projects initiated by the new Government following presidential elections next year. It is important for Bissau-Guineans to remain united in the difficult and crucial times their country will face in the near future.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ambassador Vieira for their briefings today.

I would like to commend the hard work conducted by the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Viegas Filho, in support of the State and the people of Guinea-Bissau.

When the Council last convened to discuss UNIOGBIS on 30 August (see S/PV.8337), many members were cautiously optimistic about the steps taken in 2018 in Guinea-Bissau to bring the country back on track to realizing the promises of the 2016 Conakry Agreement. Today, I suspect that many of us share concerns that such aspirations might once again be in jeopardy.

I would like to raise three specific points today.

First, I would like to recognize the critical role that UNIOGBIS, together with the Guinea-Bissau P5 group and other partners, has played in accompanying Guinea-Bissau in laying the ground for the political and institutional reforms that we hope will enable the country to move decisively beyond the political crises that have plagued it. Alongside the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Mission in Guinea-Bissau, UNIOGBIS has played an essential preventive role in the country. Through its good offices function, UNIOGBIS continues to be a trusted and valued partner for Bissau-Guineans. The impact of the mission's support to civil society organizations, and women's organizations in particular, in mobilizing political will around the Conakry Agreement is a tangible indication of the depth of trust.

Secondly, I would like to welcome President Vaz's decision yesterday to hold legislative elections on 10 March 2019. While we regret that the anticipated date of 18 November was not met, we are optimistic that the revised time frame will ensure that legislative elections are concluded in due time before the presidential elections, which is critical to ensure that constitutional provisions are respected and pivotal to long-term stability. In that respect, I would urge the leadership in Guinea-Bissau to take steps to make progress with the stability pact envisaged under the Conakry Agreement. Guinea-Bissau has made important strides in meeting its own objectives in terms of development and human rights. Let us ensure that political instability does not undermine those gains.

Thirdly, I want to welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1086) and the findings of the strategic assessment mission, which we found to be both informative and refreshingly self-critical. That kind of approach helps facilitate the work of the Council enormously. The United Kingdom is committed to seeing a phased drawdown of UNIOGBIS and transition to national stakeholders, with the support of entities of the United Nations country team. In that respect, we would encourage the Secretary-General, UNIOGBIS, the United Nations country team and all partners to initiate the development of an integrated transition plan, with immediate effect.

In conclusion, and as we close our work this year, I want to underline the importance of the year 2019 for Guinea-Bissau. With legislative and presidential elections on the horizon, watershed political moments are imminent. The withdrawal of UNIOGBIS will require a new form of partnership with the United Nations, based on a new development assistance framework to follow the United Nations Partnership Framework Terra Ranka plan. Longer-term constitutional, judicial and security-sector reform will take time and it will be important that the Bissau-Guinean authorities are supported to sustain those endeavours long beyond the departure of UNIOGBIS. Building the capacity of the United Nations country team and continuing to work closely with ECOWAS, the African Union and other Guinea-Bissau P5 group actors to ensure continuity of support is essential. The Conakry Agreement provides the framework for mitigating against future political

crises and provides a starting point for longer-term institutional reforms.

The United Kingdom looks forward to starting the new year with a constructive discussion on how, working together, we can further our partnership with Guinea-Bissau in pursuit of those objectives.

Mr. Hunter (United States of America): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ambassador Vieira for their briefings on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2018/1086) on the strategic assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). We look forward to discussing that assessment with our Council colleagues as we negotiate the Mission's future next February.

Today, we are having yet another Council meeting on the situation in Guinea-Bissau instead of focusing on the future of the country and the welfare of its people. We are faced with another self-imposed political wound and a delay in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. The Council addresses intractable issues every day; however, in Guinea-Bissau, we have before us a problem for which there are immediate and tangible solutions. This spring, after waiting through nearly four years of self-inflicted political gridlock, Guinea-Bissau's frozen Government appeared to thaw, but only after the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) took the bold step of sanctioning 19 spoilers of the Conakry Agreement. At that time, the President of Guinea-Bissau had appointed a consensus Prime Minister and scheduled legislative elections for 18 November. Given registration challenges, that date was delayed. And while we understood the logistical challenges that prompted the delay, the country's leaders have once again been capitalizing on a stalled process for their own selfish political objectives. Let us be clear — that has to end now.

We appreciate the recent announcements that have set a date for the elections. However, we are greatly concerned that the date set is well beyond the January time frame set by ECOWAS. It is critical that there be no further delays or slippage for the legislative elections. Furthermore, we expect that the presidential elections will and should take place separately and as scheduled in summer 2019. Following the apparent improvement of the country's political situation this spring, Guinea-Bissau's partners and friends have provided the necessary support needed to prepare for and hold the elections. We are pleased by the progress and voter registration that has been observed over the past several months.

However, like our partners in the region and the international community, we are very concerned over recent events in Bissau, specifically the actions of the public-order police and the blocking of visiting technicians seeking to access the technical support office of the electoral process headquarters. We note that, despite those actions and the ongoing delay, a frustrated and disappointed public has shown patience, and the pre-election environment has remained relatively calm. However, that should not be construed as passive acceptance. We urge President Vaz, Prime Minister Gomes, Mr. Domingos Simões Pereira, who is the leader of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, and other stakeholders to follow through on their pledges to foster unity, continue the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and hold the elections without delay.

The United States also welcomes the Secretary-General's strategic assessment of UNIOGBIS. We appreciate that that report provides a frank assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the work of the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau over the past several years. We also appreciate that the report ties its recommendations for the reprioritization of tasks and options for a future United Nations presence to conditions that must be met. While further detailed discussions will be required in the Security Council prior to the February mandate renewal, we support in principle the concept of a three-phase drawdown and the transfer of tasks from UNIOGBIS to the United Nations country team.

What is clear is that for that transition to be possible, Guinea-Bissau's electoral process must be credible and must proceed on schedule. Furthermore, Guinea-Bissau must avoid a return to extended political gridlock. We also agree with the sentiment expressed in the strategic assessment that, given the significant investment that the United Nations has made in Guinea-Bissau over the past two decades, the utmost care must be taken to design a transition process that maintains the gains achieved and identifies the appropriate parts of the United Nations system that are to assume any remaining tasks. We reiterate the need for stakeholders to take the right action and put the people of Guinea-Bissau first, which entails the immediate rescheduling and holding of the critical legislative elections.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): First, I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun for his useful briefing this morning. I also thank the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Vieira, for the update he gave from a peacebuilding perspective. Let me at the outset also commend the leading role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Guinea-Bissau and recognize the important of the presence of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau on the ground.

There have been a series of positive developments in Guinea-Bissau over the past few months, including the appointment of the Prime Minister, the formation of an inclusive Government, the reopening of the National Assembly, the approval of a new Government programme and the adoption of a gender-quota law. We have also witnessed the strong commitment of the people of Guinea-Bissau to the electoral process, as demonstrated by the high numbers of people that have registered to vote. Targeted measures to ensure the equal participation of women in the electoral process are, however, still needed. While we note yesterday's announcement that set 10 March as the date of the elections, we regret the postponement of the elections and the lack of preparations in that regard. We now call on the Government and all parties to urgently ensure that the conditions for free and fair democratic elections are in place and that there are no further delays. As highlighted by the Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the six-point roadmap and the Conakry Agreement are still valid and important. They must now be promptly implemented in full. The stability pact is also important. It needs to be based on an inclusive and consultative process in order to be credible and sustainable.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/1086) and his thorough assessment of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). The timeline set out for the transition seems realistic. The United Nations system must now conduct a timely and integrated transition-planning process. It is important that the Council be kept updated on the progress of that work. Predictable resources and adequate capacity for the United Nations country team will be critical to the transition, as the experience in, for example, Liberia has shown. Another lesson from Liberia — as was highlighted in the recently adopted presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/3) on the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory role to the Security Council with regard to sustaining peace — is that the Peacebuilding Commission has a particularly important role to play in such transitions. For a transition to be sustainable, it must be based on national peacebuilding priorities, as well as on political will, local ownership and inclusiveness. The Peacebuilding Commission's efforts in that regard have our full and active support.

It is important to address the root causes of conflict in Guinea-Bissau through measures such as moving forward on constitutional reform, reconciliation and political dialogue, strengthening the rule of law through strong and inclusive institutions and, not least, ensuring equal access to economic opportunities. Regional engagement will continue to be critical. Such regional efforts should be backed up by coherent international support. Our international engagement must also be sustained in the delicate post-electoral phase and include support for the aforementioned reforms. Our continued support will be crucial to helping Guinea-Bissau to consolidate peace and build a stable and prosperous future.

Mr. Tenya (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. We also thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their important briefings.

Peru notes with concern the recent events in Guinea-Bissau, where, despite the political progress that had been made, the legislative elections that were supposed to be held on 19 November have once again been postponed. We hope that the elections can indeed take place on 10 March of next year, in accordance with the presidential announcement that was issued yesterday. We are also concerned about the impact that those repeated postponements will have on the holding of the presidential elections in 2019. We stress that the mass participation of citizens in free, fair and inclusive elections is essential to the consolidation of democracy and, in turn, the legitimacy and effectiveness of the institutions needed to build sustainable peace. In that vein and in accordance with the Conakry Agreement and the six-point road map, we believe it is urgent for the Guinea-Bissau authorities to convene legislative elections that include the participation of all political

actors and are supported by regional and international players and organizations.

We reiterate the importance of promoting the greater participation of women and young people in the country's political and institutional spheres. It is also important to bear in mind that elections represent one step in a process that requires broad national consensus to be reached so that the root causes of conflicts can be addressed by building a safer, more stable and more just country. To that end, it is essential to respond to threats such as drug trafficking, transnational organized crime and growing violent extremism, which would undermine the institutional framework and the social fabric in any country. It is also necessary to strengthen the institutions required to promote economic growth, fight poverty and achieve sustainable development for the benefit of all sectors of the population.

In that regard, we highlight the work carried out by the United Nations country team to support the implementation of the national development plan, which prioritizes growth, human development, the sustainable management of resources and the strengthening of the rule of law and governance.

I conclude by underlining how important it is that the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau continue to support the country in all those efforts, in accordance with the provisions of Council resolution 2404 (2018) and in close coordination with the Peacebuilding Commission, the aforementioned country team and other relevant actors. In that vein, we also highlight the important roles played by the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the Community of Portuguese Language Countries and the European Union.

Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren (Netherlands): On behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Côte d'Ivoire for organizing this briefing. We wish to thank Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ambassador Vieira for their informative briefings.

Please allow me to focus on three important points in relation to the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and the situation in that country: first, a responsible transition; secondly, political developments; and thirdly, the role of international partners.

Regarding the possible transition of UNIOGBIS, I would like to start by thanking Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and the rest of the UNIOGBIS team for the thorough report and its clear and honest analysis (S/2018/1086). That is exactly the type of reporting that we need in order for the Security Council to do good work. The Kingdom of the Netherlands considers that report to be an example of how the United Nations can outline the evolution of peacekeeping and special political missions and ensure a smooth transition. A phased transition would definitely be necessary in any possible UNIOGBIS exit scenario, which we do not take as a given, based on resolution 2404 (2018).

Nevertheless, if the Council were to contemplate an exit, it is imperative that benchmarks be set. Benchmarks should not be linked to time but should rather be based on the achievement of actual qualitative benchmarks in the country. Those benchmarks should include, at least, the successful completion of the electoral cycle and the subsequent formation of a Government. The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to emphasize the need for a responsible transition strategy that takes into consideration the achievements of the mission and the country and allows for the active engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission. A responsible exit and a coherent transition are essential in order to both build and sustain peace in Guinea-Bissau and to prevent Guinea-Bissau from sinking deeper into political instability.

Secondly, the political situation in Guinea-Bissau is extremely troubling. The Kingdom of the Netherlands regrets the fact that the legislative elections scheduled for 18 November did not take place. We take note of the presidential decree of 20 December, in which the date for elections has been set for 10 March 2019. While we welcome the setting of a date for elections, the Kingdom of the Netherlands regrets the fact that the date is not in line with the end-of-January deadline, as stipulated in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) communiqué of 12 December. Also, given the near completion of the voter registration process, it is difficult to comprehend why the new date is not in conformity with that deadline. It remains imperative that free, fair and credible elections take place prior to the presidential elections. Combining those elections remains unacceptable.

We therefore request the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to base the date of elections on the ongoing voter registration process and to adhere to the

timeline stipulated by ECOWAS in its communiqué of 12 December. The Technical Office for Electoral Processes support should be able to continue its work unhindered, and the legislative elections must take place prior to the presidential elections. The organization of free, inclusive, fair, transparent and credible legislative and presidential elections is crucial for the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the ECOWAS six-point road map, the full implementation of which remains the only way to achieve lasting peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would, therefore, like to highlight two other elements in that regard: the signing of a stability pact; and the urgent need for constitutional reform. The stability pact must be further deliberated on in an inclusive manner, and the signing of the pact should occur prior to the organization of legislative elections. Additionally, the sanctions regime imposed under resolution 2048 (2012) remains linked to the electoral cycle. Any reconsideration of the sanctions — in any direction — should be based on the conduct and completion of a full electoral cycle.

My third point concerns the indispensable role that ECOWAS plays in building and sustaining peace in Guinea-Bissau. We commend the efforts of ECOWAS in Guinea-Bissau, particularly the visit to Bissau on 12 December. We welcome the issuance of the communiqué following the visit, in which ECOWAS called on President Vaz to announce, prior to the ECOWAS summit on 22 December, a new date for elections before the end of January. We regret that the authorities in Guinea-Bissau have not adhered to that line. In addition to the role of ECOWAS, we also want to stress the important role that the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) plays in Guinea-Bissau. We support the European Union's decision to continue to finance ECOMIB.

In conclusion, ECOWAS, the African Union, the European Union, the Community of Portuguese Language Countries and the United Nations remain partners in building peace in Guinea-Bissau, with UNIOGBIS as its main convener. We call upon the Council to continue to monitor the situation closely and base a possible reconfiguration of the tasks of UNIOGBIS on clear benchmarks and achievements, in consultation with relevant stakeholders and actors on the ground. The Council's involvement in Guinea-Bissau has a clear link to the prevention of the outbreak of violence at a difficult political impasse. It remains crucial to continue to support the Government of Guinea-Bissau and other political stakeholders in sustaining peace in Guinea-Bissau.

Mrs. Cordova Soria (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for the information provided by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Zerihoun, and by Ambassador Vieira, as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Almost two decades have passed since the special political mission in Guinea-Bissau began its work, seeking to address the complex social, political and economic landscape in our brother country after violence broke out in 1998. Today, we note with concern that the situation in Guinea-Bissau has seen no substantial improvement.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1086) containing the strategic analysis of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), resolution 2404 (2018) — which extended the mandate of the mission until February 2019 — stipulates that it must focus on three priority aspects: first, support for the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the facilitation of inclusive political dialogue and the national reconciliation process; secondly, support for the electoral process for this year's legislative elections; and thirdly, technical assistance to complete the constitutional review.

With regard to the second point concerning the electoral process, that process has been truncated by the failure to hold the legislative elections scheduled for 18 November owing to a lack of the technical and financial means needed for their consolidation. In that vein, in order to continue promoting the stabilization process in Guinea-Bissau, we consider that, in the short term, the commitment of the international community is vital in order to ensure full cooperation and the necessary support for the successful completion of the voter-registration process, in addition to assisting with electoral technical mechanisms to hold transparent, inclusive and fundamentally peaceful elections.

Furthermore, one of the structural factors of the crisis is related to the political impasse that was eventually overcome by the country's various political forces through the appointment of a consensus Prime Minister seven months ago and the formation of the Government. However, the challenges in the areas of

governance, rule of law and socioeconomic development must continue to be addressed within the framework of the political process and inclusive dialogue.

Those aspects should enable members of the Government and the political parties represented in the National Assembly to demonstrate real political will in order to continue advancing along the path of consensus in order to constructively implement the signed agreements. We believe that it is critical to promote the legitimate commitment to reaching a lasting political and social solution, guided exclusively by the best interests of the people of Guinea-Bissau.

Additionally, in the context of ensuring State stability and with regard to security aspects, the fight against drug trafficking, transnational crime and impunity must also be a priority. To that end, the United Nations has a key role to play in promoting development and strengthening and improving State capacities with a view to reducing vulnerability to drug trafficking and crime by bolstering the elements of justice and police forces. The international community must also provide Guinea-Bissau with the assistance necessary to enhance State control of its coastline and airspace, in addition to training the members of the relevant State institutions.

We also commend all the efforts of the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau, and appreciate the contribution of the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, and the crucial efforts of the Head of UNIOGBIS to reconcile the parties to the conflict and to promote dialogue. We further commend the work carried out by the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, chaired by Brazil. We once again stress the importance of strengthening the links between that body and the Security Council with respect to coordination, exchange of information and active participation.

In conclusion, we believe it imperative to redouble our joint efforts for stabilization in Guinea-Bissau. We have also stressed the need to use political tools to find political solutions with a view to achieving sustainable peace. In that context, in order to achieve stabilization and sustainable peace in Guinea-Bissau, it is imperative to place the well-being of the population and its most vulnerable sectors above any political partisan or personal interest.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

France welcomes the positive developments that have taken place in recent months in Guinea-Bissau, particularly the appointment of the consensus Prime Minister Aristides Gomes. That is an important first step towards the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement, which, we remain convinced, is the only way to help Guinea-Bissau out of the political and institutional crisis it has been enduring for many long months.

I would also like to acknowledge the central role played by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and, more generally, by the P5 group — ECOWAS, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations — in achieving those results. It is crucial that Guinea-Bissau continue to enjoy significant regional and international support in the months and years to come. The Council, in particular, bears that responsibility.

While the progress made in recent months is encouraging, other important measures are eagerly awaited in the coming weeks, the most important of which is the holding of parliamentary elections as soon as possible. France regrets that they did not take place on the announced date of 18 November, and takes note of the new date of 10 March. All commitments must now be honoured. We see that as an important test to gauge the real willingness of the various actors to advance the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement. We therefore expect the Guinea-Bissau authorities to become fully mobilized in the technical preparations for those elections, including at the highest level. Here, I am referring in particular to the finalization and validation of the electoral list, which, like the now closed voter census, cannot serve as a pretext for indefinitely postponing the holding of elections that are so important for the country's equilibrium.

The international community, for its part, is playing its full role in supporting the upcoming electoral process through the financial assistance provided by the main donors and the technical assistance of the United Nations Development Programme and the European Union. We have therefore raised our expectations of the

Guinea-Bissau authorities. In our view, the successful holding of the forthcoming elections is a necessary precondition for changes in sanctions. In that regard, I again congratulate the Guinea-Bissau military authorities on their commitment to non-interference in political affairs, which they have honoured.

The restoration of lasting peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau also requires progress in other areas in the medium term. In that regard, constitutional review should enable the Guinea-Bissau institutional system to avoid being subjected to the kind of blockages seen in recent months. Also important is the fight against organized crime and, in particular, drug trafficking, which requires not only a firm commitment on the part of the Guinea-Bissau authorities, but also the continuous support of the international community, especially the various United Nations actors present on the ground. Of equal importance is security sector reform, without which, as recent history has shown, there can be no long-term stability in the country.

Finally, France has taken good note the Secretary-General's recommendations for the future of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau following the strategic review conducted a few weeks ago. We hope that the discussions on this topic will take into account the objectives of extending the scope of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's good offices role, optimizing coordination between the various actors of the international community on the ground and providing the most effective technical support, which Guinea-Bissau needs more than ever now and for years to come.

It is still too early to know whether Guinea-Bissau is truly on the road to sustainable stabilization. The coming months, and in particular the effective holding of legislative elections, will continue to provide us with answers. In that regard, the supporting role of the region and, more broadly, of the international community and the Council is all the more important.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira, Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings.

The developments in Guinea-Bissau give abundant cause for concern. We regret the fact that the progress made following the establishment of a consensus-based Government in April has once again morphed into clashes among the main political forces. Against the background of pressing socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges, this is fanning the flames of what is already a highly volatile situation in the country.

We welcome the President of Guinea-Bissau's announcement yesterday of the decision to set 10 March 2019 as the new date for parliamentary elections. Although we wish to avoid dramatizing the fact that the appointments to the National Assembly have been postponed, timely elections on 18 November would have generated an important positive momentum for improving the overall climate.

We now see that the situation in Guinea-Bissau is inching towards a perilous threshold, beyond which turmoil awaits both the country and its people. At this fateful moment, we call on all social and political forces to act responsibly and to proceed in a way that reflects national interests and leads to a prompt resolution of existing disputes. We have closely studied the report on the outcomes of the strategic assessment of the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (S/2018/1086). We believe that, at the present moment, the United Nations mission is a unique guarantor for national reconciliation. The Office is successfully undertaking projects for social development and building the capacities of law enforcement and the country's armed forces.

At the same time, we must recognize the fact that, in many areas, its potential, above all in the political sphere, cannot be fully realized. In general, we believe that the reconfiguration of the Integrated Office needs to be approached in an extremely balanced manner. Any hasty drawdown of the mission's work would lead only to greater divisions within Bissau-Guinean society, degrade State institutions and result in an increase in drug trafficking and corruption. In that regard, we believe that it would be advisable to decide on the details concerning the implementation of the mission's reconfiguration only after the electoral cycle has been completed and the country has returned to the constitutional path.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Assistant Secretary-General Zerihoun and Ambassador Vieira for their briefings.

China has closely followed recent developments in the situation in Guinea-Bissau. We take note of the special report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/1086)

on the strategic assessment of the work of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and its analysis and assessment of the situation in the country. China commends the mediation efforts undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the States of the region in promoting the political process in Guinea-Bissau.

We take note of President Vaz's 20 December announcement of 10 March 2019 as the new date for legislative elections. We hope that the Bissau-Guinean parties will work together to ensure that elections are held on schedule and in a smooth manner. At the same time, the international community should provide technical, financial and logistical support for the holding of the elections commensurate with the needs of the Guinea-Bissau Government. The international community should fully respect Guinea-Bissau's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Bissau-Guinean parties should keep the long-term interests of their State and people in mind, take concrete actions with political decisiveness, build consensus, resolve differences through dialogue and consultations and work towards achieving a better quality of life for their people and national stability and development.

As always, China supports African countries in seeking African solutions to African issues. China supports ECOWAS and the countries of the region in continuing to mediate the situation on the ground and play a constructive role in advancing the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and the ECOWAS six-point road map. We call on UNIOGBIS, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, the United Nations country teams and other stakeholders to strengthen coordination and collaboration with the relevant United Nations agencies and build synergy with the African Union, ECOWAS and the States of the region through mediation efforts so that each party can leverage its own strength and provide robust support for economic development and the improvement of life in Guinea-Bissau.

China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community to promote dialogue and engagement among the Bissau-Guinean parties and play a constructive role in securing sustained stability and development in Guinea-Bissau and West Africa, in general.

Mr. Mielus (Poland): I would like to thank Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun and Ambassador Mauro Vieira, in his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their informative briefings on recent developments in Guinea-Bissau.

Reported delays in preparations for the holding of legislative elections raise our deep concern. The credible conduct of the legislative elections is a crucial step towards the resumption of peacebuilding and an important element of the Conakry Agreement. That is why we welcome the recent decision to hold elections on 10 March 2019. We reiterate our call on the Bissau-Guinean authorities to provide firm political direction and assume leadership in the electoral process, as well as empower the electoral management bodies to implement appropriate solutions for holding credible elections.

Poland believes that maintaining the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) with its current strength and mandate throughout the upcoming months is crucial to ensuring the mission's full capacity to support the electoral process, including by providing good offices to national actors and coordinating efforts with the so-called Guinea-Bissau P5.

It is also important to ensure that the UNIOGBIS exit is managed in a way that would help maintain the gains achieved so far. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's recommendation to establish a streamlined good offices special political mission following the end of the electoral cycle. It is equally important to ensure that ECOWAS and individual regional leaders maintain Guinea-Bissau on their agenda not only during the critical electoral period, but also beyond that period when the country will need the assistance of the international community to implement a reform agenda. In that regard, the role of the Peacebuilding Commission will also be indispensable.

In conclusion, it is important for the United Nations to remain engaged in Guinea-Bissau throughout the transition and exit of UNIOGBIS, and beyond, to help mobilize the international community in supporting the institutional reform agenda. Finally, let me express our full support to Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the personnel of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team for their dedication.

Mr. Albanai (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to sincerely thank Mr. Tayé-Brook

Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Mauro Vieira, in his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their valuable briefings on the latest developments in Guinea-Bissau. I would also like to commend the pivotal role that the PBC is playing in Guinea-Bissau.

I will comment on two fundamental aspects concerning today's subject: the political situation and the strategic assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS).

First, with regard to the political situation, we regret the slow pace of preparatory work for holding the elections, especially the voter registration process, which is necessary for holding the legislative elections. We also regret the Government's decision to postpone those elections, which were supposed to be held on 18 November, as well as its non-compliance with the electoral calendar. In that regard, the State of Kuwait appreciates and supports the role that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is playing to resolve that issue. We also support the ECOWAS request to the Government of Guinea-Bissau to schedule the date for the elections before the next ECOWAS summit, to be held on 22 December. In that regard, we welcome yesterday's announcement by the Government of Guinea-Bissau of its intention to hold the legislative elections on 10 March 2019.

Over this year, we have noted the progress made in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement and hope that the postponement of the elections will not impact it, especially given that the date for holding the presidential elections in 2019 is fast approaching. The concurrent holding of legislative and presidential elections would have an impact on all the political actors in the country. Therefore, work must be done mow to ensure that the elections are held on the date set according to the most recent electoral calendar.

We renew our full support for the five organizations — ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries — seeking to achieve progress in resolving the political crisis in the coming period. I also commend the support of the neighbouring countries in funding the electoral process. We look forward to the outcome of the ECOWAS summit with regard to the Guinea-Bissau situation

Secondly, with regard to the strategic assessment, I thank the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for his report (S/2018/1086) submitted pursuant to resolution 2404 (2018). We take note of the recommendations contained therein pertaining to the reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS after the presidential elections are held next year and the drawdown plan for the upcoming two years. We hope that all efforts — international, regional and those of the United Nations — will be coordinated with Guinea-Bissau. We are ready to take account of all the recommendations contained in the report when the Security Council considers renewing UNIOGBIS mandate during February 2019.

In conclusion, I commend once again the efforts made by UNIOGBIS and its cooperation with the various active elements in Guinea-Bissau. We stress the need for all parties to cooperate in order to guarantee the success of the transition plan, as proposed by the strategic assessment, because many challenges in the country are long term and require the participation of various United Nations offices, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel. Moreover, regional organizations and the Peacebuilding Commission have fundamental roles to play in the implementation of development strategies.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): As an observer of the African Union, we join in and associate ourselves with the statements already made by the members of the African troika and to be made by the Ivorian presidency, which has so ably and effectively conducted the stewardship of the Council this month. Mr. President, please accept our most sincere congratulations.

We also welcome Ambassador Da Silva, Permanent Representative of Guinea-Bissau, to the Chamber. We commend Mr. Zerihoun, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Vieira for their insightful briefings on the latest developments in Guinea-Bissau. We praise their tireless efforts to bring peace and stability to the country. Please allow me to share some of our observations and recommendations regarding the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

We welcome the progress made by all parties with regard to the stabilization of and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. We highly appreciate the good offices of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) and the mediation efforts of regional,

subregional organizations and neighbouring States, especially the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel and the Guinea-Bissau P5 group members, whose coordinated efforts are very helpful. We also welcome the commitments of the international partners to providing necessary technical, logistical and financial support to the electoral process.

We acknowledge the decision of the President and the readiness of the Government of Guinea-Bissau to undertake and advance the necessary measures for a timely conclusion of the preparations for the legislative elections on 10 March 2019 and express hope for their credible and timely conduct. We expect that all the stakeholders will demonstrate good political will to that end. We reiterate that all parties should respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Guinea-Bissau.

We also underscore the importance of the presence of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau in ensuring stability during the electoral cycle, and we urge the international partners to continue to support these regional forces. We call on all parties to promptly take the steps necessary to implement the remaining provisions of the Conakry Agreement, which remains the primary framework for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. That includes the adoption of the stability pact and constitutional review. Political stability in the country can be achieved by reforms aimed at strengthening the governing bodies. There is a need for an open and inclusive nationwide dialogue to develop guiding principles of the reforms.

Ensuring the participation of women and youth in the political process at every stage and increasing their economic opportunities are equally important. Besides the human dimension, the perils of drug trafficking and transnational organized crime have a multifaceted impact on the economy, overall security and community and individual well-being. National engagement is critical to implementing different international programmes and projects aimed at strengthening the security, judicial and law enforcement sectors. It is therefore necessary to continue strengthening the national institutional framework and response against the threats and close cooperation with UNIOGBIS, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and INTERPOL.

We are also worried by the deterioration of the economic situation. We believe that the most effective measures for sustainable peace and stability must be sought to ensure the country's resilience by providing increased support for the existing development plans and the United Nations peacebuilding programmes. Further efforts need to focus on the structural drivers of instability by reducing poverty; creating better opportunities for education, employment and health care; and strengthening local governance. We call on all donors to provide the necessary funds for the implementation of all such measures. We also underscore the important role of the Peacebuilding Commission in fostering national ownership of a transition plan and call for preparations to develop an inclusive and comprehensive peacebuilding plan.

Lastly, we endorse the Secretary-General's special report on the strategic assessment of UNIOGBIS (S/2018/1086), and support his proposals on gradual reconfiguration, a phased drawdown and the exit of the mission by the end of 2020.

In conclusion, we would like to extend our full support to the work of Mr. Viegas Filho, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, and the UNIOGBIS team, and reaffirm our readiness to cooperate closely with all the relevant parties to support peacebuilding and consolidation efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

I should like to commend Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Mr. Mauro Vieira, Permanent Representative of Brazil and Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their excellent briefings.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General and to the strategic assessment mission, whose report (S/2018/1086), submitted to the Council for analysis, reflects the interest of the international community in the political developments in Guinea-Bissau. Indeed, the request for an evaluation of the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), expressed by the Security Council in resolution 2404 (2018), responds to the need to reconfigure the Office, its mechanisms of action and its resources in order to

achieve greater effectiveness on the ground with respect to the objectives assigned to it.

Côte d'Ivoire, aware of the complexity of the scope of action of UNOGBIS, commends the efforts of the mission to accompany Guinea-Bissau towards a definitive way out of the crisis. Through its mission of good offices and mediation between national stakeholders, its role of coordinator of the activities of the various international partners and its close collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States, the United Nations Office continues to play a fundamental preventive role, thereby contributing to the preservation of the institutional balance within Guinea-Bissau.

However, my delegation notes with regret that, as the Secretary-General has pointed out, the results achieved are not commensurate with the resources deployed and the degree of investment on the part of national stakeholders. In that regard, the Secretary-General offers the Security Council a range of proposals that could contribute effectively to the gradual recalibration of UNIOGBIS and redefine its priorities in the light of the major imperative of implementing the peace and security pillar in a more coherent, more flexible and more efficient framework, in greater harmony with the development and human rights pillars.

To implement that recalibration, the Secretary-General proposes a three-phase reconfiguration of the mission, to be completed no later than 31 December 2020, namely, the election period, the post-election period and the transition and withdrawal of the Bureau. That timeline should help mobilize the support of the international community for the institutional reform agenda. Côte d'Ivoire takes note with interest of the recommendations and invites Council members to appropriate these new lines of thought in order to make the best possible use thereof for a definitive resolution of the crisis in Guinea-Bissau.

My delegation regrets that legislative elections in Guinea-Bissau were not held by the scheduled deadline of 18 November 2018. That situation should not make us lose sight of the progress made or constrain our momentum and our determination to support the Guinea-Bissau authorities in the process of ending the crisis. To that end, my country urges the Council to remain in solidarity, while supporting the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative and strengthening its support for the leadership of ECOWAS. We applaud commitment of ECOWAS and fully share the concerns it expressed in its 12 December communiqué, including the urgent need to set a new date for the parliamentary elections. In the light of that requirement, President José Mário Vaz, by a decree of 20 December, set the date of the parliamentary elections for 10 March 2019.

My delegation takes note of those latest developments and urges all international stakeholders, especially ECOWAS, whose next summit will be held on 22 December, to assess the advisability of holding the election on the scheduled date and to take all necessary measures to support the people of Guinea-Bissau in that process.

In addition, Côte d'Ivoire encourages the Bissau-Guinean stakeholders to take definitive ownership of their country's future by placing the national interest above all else once and for all. Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the perfectly coordinated action of the P5 group, comprising the United Nations, ECOWAS, the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the European Union which has enabled the efficient mobilization of financial resources and the registration of over 90 per cent of voters.

Moreover, my country is of the opinion that, in the efforts to resolve the crisis in Guinea-Bissau, the international community must integrate the thorny issue of combating drug trafficking and transnational crime. As mentioned by the Secretary-General, a comprehensive approach at the subregional level could help to reduce the negative consequences of such scourges. In that regard, my country recalls, particularly within the framework of cooperation between the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and ECOWAS, the existence of the ECOWAS regional action plan for West Africa for the period 2016-2020, the implementation of which seeks to contribute, inter alia, to the reduction of drug abuse, drug trafficking and crime in the subregion.

Côte d'Ivoire commends the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and reiterates its support to him in carrying out his mission.

In conclusion, my country reiterates its call on the international community to continue supporting the process to end the crisis in Guinea-Bissau. It also urges Guinea-Bissau's political actors to do everything in their power to restore peace in their country and achieve

its economic recovery by implementing the 2016-2020 Partnership Framework with the United Nations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Da Silva (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to participate in this meeting of the Security Council and to address you in my capacity as the Permanent Representative of my country.

The members of the Council will recall that in April, at the Extraordinary Summit of the Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS), held in Lomé, which focused on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, Bissau-Guinean political actors adopted a road map to end the crisis, which persisted despite the Agreement signed in Conakry in October 2016. The road map provided, among other things, for the organization of parliamentary elections on 18 November 2018.

However, delays in mobilizing funds from our partners and technical difficulties related to electoral kits and their delivery to Bissau, compounded by the rainy season, made it impossible to meet the deadline initially planned for the electoral census, which could only effectively begin on 19 September, one month later. Given that observation and the difficulties facing the process, the President of the Republic decided not to issue a new decree to set the date of the parliamentary elections in order to give the census a chance to register a large majority of the citizen voters. It should be noted here that, to date, more than 95 per cent of voters have been registered.

The result achieved demonstrates the wisdom of the President of the Republic's decision to not rush the issuance of a new decree to fix the date of the parliamentary elections. After extensive consultations with all political actors, the President of the Republic issued a decree yesterday, 20 December, setting 10 March 2019 as the date to hold the parliamentary elections.

The upcoming parliamentary elections are extremely important, but it would be an exaggeration to believe that simply holding free, fair and transparent elections would automatically establish a resilient and stable political order at the institutional level. To that end, allow me to refer to the Conakry Agreement, which calls for political reform that will give our national democratic institutions greater resilience and hinder the re-emergence of political instability. It should be recalled that in a context of persistent instability, no other reform will be successful — neither defence and security sector reform, justice sector reform, nor the economic reform necessary to operationalize the Sustainable Development Goals.

I take this opportunity to thank all those present for their patience and solidarity and to wish a merry Christmas and a successful New Year to their respective countries, as well as health and well-being to their families.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.